



Menopause Support Policy

Introduction

The University is committed to fostering an inclusive, supportive environment where all employees are treated fairly, with dignity, respect, and understanding, and where their health and wellbeing is fully supported. As the demographic of our workforce changes, we aim to ensure appropriate health-related support is provided to all our employees, irrespective of gender, including for those experiencing menopause.


This policy aims to break the silence surrounding menopause and its potential effects on work and life, recognising the challenges it presents for many and the ongoing stigma associated with it. We aim to ensure employees feel comfortable discussing personal health experiences if they wish, including menopause, without fear of stigma or judgement.

Menopause is a normal and healthy life stage, but experiences vary hugely and are shaped by factors including symptoms, race and ethnicity, social meanings, expectations, self-esteem, life adversity, and general health. Menopause, in and of itself, is not an illness. However, some of the symptoms of menopause can cause illness and may impact on work performance and wellbeing in the workplace.

Some women have few or no symptoms over the menopause transition while others have severe symptoms that can impact their quality of life and may be persistent. For employees who are experiencing debilitating symptoms, it can be a difficult and stressful time as well as a very sensitive and personal matter. There may be times when an employee who is experiencing severe symptoms needs adjustments to support them to continue working. The purpose of workplace adjustment is to provide a supportive working environment by making appropriate adjustments and removing barriers wherever possible.

Research from the Department of Health (2022) shows that over half (55%) of women describe their experience of perimenopause and menopause as negative. One in three women report experiencing symptoms constantly, yet only 23% feel comfortable discussing this with their manager. Given that 93% agree menopause can significantly affect daily life, it is vital to normalise these conversations, equip managers with the tools they need, and build a workplace culture that actively supports menopause-related challenges.

This policy is designed to raise awareness and ensure meaningful, practical support for all affected employees, educate leadership, and prevent discrimination or isolation. We aim to ensure that for those that need it, support and the option of reasonable adjustments is there to ensure that they can continue in their working life with little to no disruption.



It is generally accepted that the menopause affects people between 45 and 60 years of age, however it can occur much earlier for some and perimenopausal symptoms can be felt from up to 6 years prior to the onset of menopause so there are wide variations in age and symptoms.

For the purposes of this policy and associated documents, when we refer to menopause, we are using this term inclusively to include those experiencing all forms of menopause (e.g. perimenopause, premature menopause, medical menopause).

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to set out the commitments of the University to employees and managers on providing the right support to manage menopausal symptoms at work where they arise.

Through this Policy, the University is committed to creating a culture of open, respectful communications around this issue, providing training and awareness for managers and employees on the impacts of menopause, ensuring appropriate support measures and adequate working environments are in place for those affected by menopause.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the University who are experiencing menopause, whether they are permanent or temporary employees. DCU recognises and values its diversity and trans inclusive culture. We are aware people of diverse gender expressions and identities experience menopause, and it is therefore not just an issue for women. This policy also applies to women, non-binary and intersex people, and trans men who may experience symptoms of the menopause.

While trans women do not experience menopause, they may experience hormonal fluctuations due to hormone replacement therapy or similar treatment. This can cause similar symptoms, and which in this case will be covered by this policy.

Policy Statement

The University recognises it has an important role in supporting employees during this stage of life and that at times it can be a challenging transition. The following are the key principles of this policy:

- To work on the presumption that employees of all gender identities and ages are competent and capable in their roles, and any request for reasonable adjustments to support ongoing menopausal symptoms does not undermine this.
- To foster an environment in which colleagues, where willing, can openly and comfortably initiate conversations or engage in discussions about menopause appropriate to the workplace without embarrassment and to lift any stigma associated with the menopause.
- To raise awareness of menopause related issues at work and enable those experiencing menopause to attend work and contribute their best whilst experiencing symptoms, through the provision of reasonable supports and adjustments to the working environment and working patterns, where feasible.
- To ensure that the careers of those experiencing debilitating menopausal symptoms are not impacted due to the menopause.
- To educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of menopause and how they can effectively support colleagues.
- To ensure the needs of colleagues experiencing menopause are considered and know where to access supports and resources.
- To ensure that any discussions that take place are treated sensitively and confidentially and are not disclosed without the express permission of the employee.
- To support employees experiencing menopausal symptoms in the same way as an employee with any ongoing health complaint.

Roles & Responsibilities

Those experiencing menopause may develop many strategies themselves for coping with problematic menopausal symptoms at work. The success of these can be enhanced by supportive managers and colleagues.

The roles and responsibilities of staff engaging with this policy are as follows:

The University has a responsibility to:

- Create an inclusive and healthy culture where conversations about menopause can occur and which allow people experiencing menopausal symptoms to feel supported and valued in the workplace.
- Support and encourage line managers to be equipped with the knowledge and awareness they may need to have to support employees experiencing the menopause.
- Champion and raise awareness of the impact of the menopause on those experiencing it.

Employees in a position of authority have a responsibility to:

- Familiarise themselves with the Menopause Policy and Guidance Materials and attend any relevant training sessions.
- Have an understanding of menopause and of what supports are available to meet the needs of employees. Line Managers are not expected to be experts in menopause, but awareness of menopause and how to effectively support colleagues is important.
- Respect an employee's right not to discuss personal issues, but where an employee would like to discuss menopause-related issues appropriate to the workplace setting, be open to have conversations with them, appreciating the personal nature of the conversation and treating it sensitively and professionally.
- Consider, with the employee, how best they can be supported including any reasonable requests to accommodate changes at work that may be helpful to manage symptoms (*please see Guidance for Managers under Supporting Documentation*).
- Implement Occupational Health advice and any recommendations where reasonably practicable (in instances when an employee is referred to Occupational Health).
- Ensure that agreed actions are implemented and ongoing dialogue occurs.
- Create an inclusive and healthy culture where conversations about the menopause can occur and which allows people experiencing menopausal symptoms to feel supported and valued in the workplace.

All members of the University, including those experiencing menopause, have a responsibility to:

- Taking personal responsibility for their health and wellbeing, seeking medical advice if necessary.
- Think about what adjustments/changes to the role would help alleviate any symptoms that are impacting their working life and discuss this with their line manager or other appropriate person(s).
- Familiarise themselves with the guidance and information provided in the Policy Toolkit.
- Where willing to disclose menopausal symptoms, be open in conversations with line managers, People Partner and Occupational Health (where appropriate) and keep their line manager informed of any changes to their health that impacts on their workplace duties and responsibilities.
- Be willing to support colleagues and understand any changes at work which have been agreed to support their colleagues as a result of menopausal symptoms.
- Comply with all the University policies and procedures relating to equality and diversity, ensuring that individuals are treated with respect and dignity and are not subjected to inappropriate comments when experiencing symptoms of the menopause.

DCU People (HR) have a responsibility to:

- Offer guidance to line managers and employees on the interpretation of this policy.
- Support managers and employees to have a greater understanding of the menopause so that they can support those on their menopause journey, particularly through the provision of training and educational resources.
- Provide guidance to employees who have approached the People department directly in relation to the supports available.
- Where necessary, support line managers to enable the provision of accommodations and supports that are helpful to manage symptoms.
- Ensure relevant policies include reference to the menopause.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this guidance in respect of related absence levels and performance.
- Make referrals to occupational health as required.
- Signpost to relevant supports, including the Employee Assistance Service.

Menopause and Sick Leave

Notwithstanding that menopause is not classified as an illness, there may be instances where an employee becomes unwell as a result of menopause symptoms and may need to avail of sick leave. Employees should follow procedures for reporting illness as outlined under the DCU Sick Leave Policy.

Menopause and Supporting Performance

Depending on the type and severity of symptoms, menopause has the potential to have a negative effect on an employee's ability to perform at work temporarily (for example, due to tiredness from a difficulty in sleeping, mood changes or temporary problems with memory and concentration). Managers should take into account the impact of menopause on an employee's performance where there are severe symptoms present and, in consultation with DCU People as appropriate, be as flexible as possible when considering what adjustments can be made to a role or working conditions to help an employee maintain performance levels.

For some, menopausal symptoms can last for a considerable and undefined period of time. Managers and employees should consider this when looking at both workplace adjustments and performance.

Confidentiality

Every employee has the right to privacy in respect of their medical status. It is essential that managers ensure that all information shared by the employee is treated in the strictest confidence and is only shared with others where necessary and with the consent of the employee. It is good practice to discuss with the employee how they wish any questions from their peers/colleagues to be managed. Confidentiality must be respected

unless the employee indicates that they approve of their team being informed on their behalf in a tactful and respectful way.

Definitions

Menopause	<p>Menopause is part of the natural ageing process. It refers to the time when menstruation has ceased for 12 consecutive months. It is triggered by lower levels of oestrogen, which decrease naturally between the ages of 45 and 55. Whilst it is a natural process, it can be brought on earlier by certain things e.g. chemotherapy, hysterectomy.</p> <p>Menopause can cause a wide range of physical and psychological symptoms that can last for several years. The majority of menopausal women experience symptoms, but everyone is different and symptoms can fluctuate and be felt to varying degrees. Experiencing any of the typical symptoms can pose a challenge for women as they go about their daily lives, including at work. There are 40+ symptoms of menopause, some of the most typical symptoms of the menopause include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● hot flushes (brief and sudden surges of heat usually felt in the face, neck and chest)● sleep disturbance that can make people feel tired and irritable● night sweats (hot flushes that happen during the night)● irregular periods and/or periods can become light or heavy● muscle and joint stiffness, aches and pains● headaches● weight gain● psychological issues such as mood disturbances, anxiety and/or depression, memory loss,● panic attacks, loss of confidence and reduced concentration● genitourinary symptoms of menopause (GSM), including urinary tract infections (UTIs), cystitis and vaginal dryness● palpitations (heartbeats that become more noticeable)● skin changes (dryness, acne, general itchiness) <p>On average the menopause lasts 7.4 years. Some people go through menopause with little impact on their daily life. However, others experience symptoms that can last for several years and have an impact on their performance and attendance at work.</p>
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Perimenopause	The time leading up to the end of your periods when changes start to happen. This typically starts in the age groups of late 30s to early 40s.
Post-menopause	This is a biological stage of life when a woman has not had a period for over 12 consecutive months. Post-menopause, you will no longer have periods but some women do continue to experience symptoms of menopause.
Premature Menopause	This occurs before the age of 40 (also known as POI - Premature Ovarian Insufficiency) which may be brought on because of several reasons, including illness, surgery, or genetics. In many cases causes are idiopathic (i.e. no known cause).
Medical Menopause	This is an umbrella term that includes surgical menopause as well as menopause due to medication, such as chemotherapy or radiation damage to the ovaries, or from the use of other medications to intentionally induce menopause as part of the treatment of certain diseases. Sometimes it is permanent, and sometimes it is not. For this group, symptoms can often be more severe and specialist management and support may be needed.
Surgical Menopause	This follows the removal of one or both ovaries or radiation of the pelvis.

Related Documentation

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following guidelines within the [Menopause Support Toolkit](#):

- Menopause Support: [Guidelines for Managers](#)
- Menopause Support: [Guidelines for Employees](#)


Contact

Any queries regarding this policy should be directed to your DCU People Partner.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed as and when changes are required.

Version Control

Policy Name	Menopause Support Policy		 Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath Dublin City University
Unit Owner	DCU People		
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End.